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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## "LA CHAUMIÈRE INDIENNE."

THE SUMMER HOME OF TWO BOHEMIAN ARTISTS  
IN RURAL FRANCE.



THE artists of whom I write were two American ladies who sought a lodge in some picturesque neighborhood, where both models and rents were cheap. They were to remain abroad a number of years, and therefore hoped to find some cottage of which they could make comparatively permanent headquarters; where they could deposit their extra luggage and artistic "impedimenta" during the winter season, when they were closely packed in "rooms" in Paris; whither they could run down at Christmas with a friend or two for a gay holiday if so the spirit moved them; where they could spend seven productive months of the year at the least possible expense; whither they could retire if invalided; where, in fact, they could feel they had some shadow and semblance of a home in a foreign land.

It is unnecessary to tell of their search, as my story deals only with their success, and not with their disappointments in finding exquisitely picturesque cottages, ivy grown and thatched with russet gold, either so damp or so leaky as to be entirely out of the question for them. Their success finally came, and they found, high upon a daisy-sprinkled hillside of green velvet, where tall trees cast cool shadows all summer, with wide view of stately river moving down to meet the sea, a shimmering marble city in the distance, bosky hills and level plains set with châteaux, old Norman churches, and the most paintable thatched cottages imaginable, the chimney, roof and four walls of a peasant's cottage, unoccupied and to let. The roof was red tiles, the walls rough gray stone, the doors coarse boards, the floors hard-trodden clay. There were two rooms below. One, with a cavernous fireplace, a high mantel, and windows to the ground like doors, was immediately chosen for salon and studio. The other was smaller, with cupboard set in the wall, and two dingier smaller windows. Out of this room to a hole in the wall above ascended the straightest and steepest of ladders, the only means of access to the roofed space above. This space was a wild sort of loft, vaulted by red tiles, and with great chasms of daylight between the clay floor and the wide eaves that hung far below the tops of the walls. Ivy grew luxuriantly over the warm yellow stones; roses flourished in the tiny garden, and even clambered over the mouldering hog'shead into which rain-water dripped beside the mossy flat doorstep.

There was an ivy-grown shed also, clinging with loose and rattling fingers to the end of the house. A steep path wound ribbon-like down the hill to the village below. It was eminently picturesque and foreign-looking, a delight to artistic eyes. Likewise was it pre-eminently disorderly and uncomfortable—enough to drive a methodical housekeeper mad.

For these walls, chimney and roof, the ladies struck a bargain, agreeing to pay twenty-five dollars a year for four years, and the proprietor engaging for that price to lay down rough floors in the rooms below and to reset the windows with clearer glass. More he would not do, and the artists took possession of a home not less primitive than the log cabin of a western prairie, though within a stone's throw of a church older than

the English conquest, and within sight of abbeys and châteaux older than our country.

Between them they had just eighty dollars with which to put this unpromising establishment in human living order. They had also some provision of blankets, bed linen, and table linen brought down with them from Bohemian housekeeping in Paris. The eighty dollars was all they had, and as it was made to suffice, by miraculous pullings, pinchings, and stretchings, to cover every expenditure necessary to make the place livable, it will not be necessary to relate those expenditures in detail.

The first investment was in a quantity of straw matting. This was not only for the splintery floors, but



DECORATIVE DESIGN. BY E. COURBOIN.

to cover the coarse mud-plastered walls and ceiling. When nicely fastened, smooth and taut, it gave the rooms a very tropical East Indian air, and suggested at once the name by which the house was ever afterward known, "La Chaumière Indienne." The rough door between the two rooms had been taken away; the front door fortunately, although clumsily, opened outwards. The doorways and windows were then amply draped with strong yellow muslin, arranged in sculpturesque folds, and bordered with straggling coral patterns painted by the ladies. The unsightly mantel was repainted, waxed, and adorned with water-color sketches on home-made rustic easels, with decorative



DECORATIVE DESIGN. BY E. COURBOIN.

vines and tall flowers trained high and wide up the matting wall from pretty vases. The cavernous fireplace was arranged for the summer as a bower of ivy vines, with boughs of blossoming wild shrubs which grew profusely on every hand. Thus the rooms were ready for furnishing.

A charcoal brazier took the place of a cooking stove, and most of the cooking was done under the shade of the rose bushes in the garden, with decorative designs of rose-globe or lilac plume shadowed upon beefsteaks and cutlets, while odors of mignonnette and violet drowned fumes of onion and cabbage. Thus more space was left in the house for the easels, stretchers, and cumbering sketches with which artistic Bohemian habitations are given to overflowing. The large bed-

stead, which made such a colossal chasm in the furnishing funds, was carried piecemeal up the ladder, and the ladies slept in that wild loft, with morning sunlight slanting up under the eaves into their faces every morning, and wanton birds making frantic riot about their pillows, until the frost came and they had to have the dining-room below turned into a bed-room. Half a dozen chairs were bought, the pretty folding chairs with carpet seats and high backs, such as cost in France from one dollar to a dollar and a half apiece. There were two large plain pine tables draped to the floor in folds as artistic as those of doors and windows. These drapings were two gray blanket shawls, from Lawrence, Massachusetts, upon which the artists had basted bands of other gray, heavily and showily wrought with crimson wool, and bordered by a fringe of the same crimson.

The tops of these square pine tables were always kept covered with squares of crimson flannel of the exact size of the table tops. These squares were fringed and were intended to protect the gray drapings from accident and wear, it being the intention of the decorators to restore their shawls to the original purpose of their creation when the autumnal breezes should blow and hoar-frost lie on the grass.

Floral decorations are cheap and effective. "La Chaumière Indienne" was glorious with them. They hung, great solid globes of sculptured malachite, or cascades of feathery lightness, in all the open windows, pendent from the door frames, rippling down from ten-cent brackets on the straw-matting walls, dripping down from the matting ceiling. Pine wood also was cheap and labor not dear, and so the ladies provided themselves from the town under the hill with a number of semicircular bits of pine—like halves of barrel heads—and a few bracket supports of painted iron. The semicircular bits of pine they painted black and then waxed to the brilliancy of ebony. The ebon half-discs were then fastened low against the walls in all sorts of convenient and picturesque places, and served to support tall vases of flowers and foliage, with here a five-franc cast of the Venus di Milo, and there a seven-franc one of the Apollo Belvedere.

"La Chaumière Indienne" is a product of climes where clothes are often superfluous. Hence the true Indian cottage is never opulent in closets and store places, as are the dwellings of thrifty New England housekeepers. "Bohémiennes" usually have no wealth of robes and laces to pack away, no "lingerie" and "naperie" to gloat over hidden in lavender-scented sepulchres. Nevertheless these "Bohémiennes" felt very severely the antagonism between their Yankee nurture and their "Chaumière Indienne" practice, and were not content till from the quaint market-place under the hill, where wooden-saboted women sold rusty fire andirons, shattered buffets, and decrepit armoires, they had bought two plain unpainted chests of draw-

ers, dingy and stained with coarse usage, and never more than the cheapest pine at their best. These chests of drawers ("bureaus" Americans call them) were immediately put into quarantine, lest subtle but noxious foes should lurk in their recesses. Then they were largely lathered, enthusiastically scrubbed, and restored to almost their virginal innocence of wine, ink, and oil. Upon one of them, after painting it yellow, one of the artists tried a novel mode of decoration, artistically arranging the fronts of the drawers with graceful designs in pressed and varnished oak leaves, showy brake, and delicate fern, over which was laid a coating of varnish. The other artist arranged her bureau by painting it in flower and foliage patterns upon a black ground, over which was laid the usual surface of furniture wax.



The effect was not precisely that of buhl marquetry, or suggestive of the stately salons of Fontainebleau and Versailles, but it was regarded as a majestic success in the "Chaumière Indienne," and what higher appreciation ever came to André Boule?

M. B. WRIGHT.

#### ABOUDOIR OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

IN a secluded corner of the South Kensington Museum is a tiny apartment completely decorated and partially furnished in the fashion which prevailed at the apogee of that airy and elegant style called Louis Seize. Unlike most of the specimen "boudoirs" and "courts" furnished for exhibition purposes, this is genuine in almost every detail, and is said to have been planned by Marie Antoinette and one of her ladies of honor, the Marquise de Serilly, as a surprise to that lady's husband upon his return from a long absence.

The room is tiny indeed, measuring only ten by fourteen feet. French apartments, even in palaces, were often so absurdly small as to excite our wonder that they could be used for living purposes. The dressing-room of Marie Antoinette herself at Versailles is even smaller than this. Although state apartments were imposingly spacious, ordinary living rooms were mere boxes. They were exquisitely decorated, jewel-casket fashion, but seldom fit for human beings to spend much of their time in. As well as jewel-caskets, they were scent-boxes, ever redolent of musk, attar of rose, and every new fashionable perfume. They were brilliantly lighted with sperm or wax, but never ventilated, the French, then as now, having a horror of fresh air, and considering themselves when "entre deux airs" to be almost as badly off as if under the axe of the guillotine.

Exquisite as the taste of that period was, one cannot examine this little boudoir without being conscious that it lacked somewhat of virile force, that it was, in fact, effeminate. There are also faults of taste in the decoration that no designer would fall into today, such as figures using muscular force to support nothing more weighty than baskets of flowers, a mixture of mythological and theatrical pastorals, and alto-

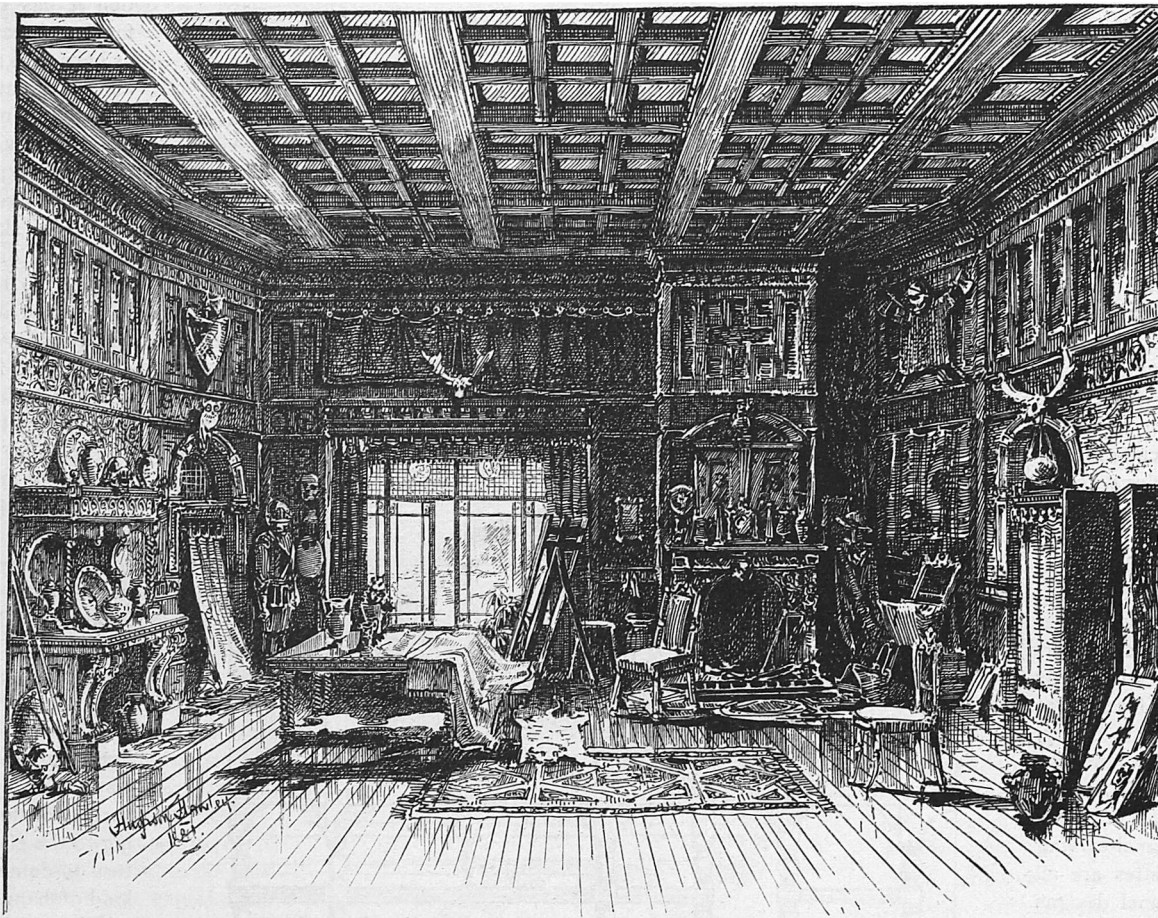
gether a superabundance of ornament and a consequent want of breadth and repose; but all the work is admirable in execution, most of the carving being in delicate low relief, and the colors being contrasted

fireplace is Pomona, bare-bosomed, elegantly limbed, leaning upon a lion, with a misty landscape background. Below this lunette is the inevitable chimney mirror to which French household art clings so steadfastly to this day. The gilt mirror frame is of a foliage pattern, the interstices between each leaf pierced so that the mirror, which passes behind, shows through the space.

The fireplace projects nearly nine inches and is of gray marble, supported on two sides by draped figures of bearded men. The rounded shelf of the mantel rests upon the heads of these figures as upon caryatides. The mouldings of the mantel-shelf and of the horizontal panel that stretches from these figures and forms the front of the chimney-piece are delicately chiselled in gilt bronze. Garlands of bunches of holly-leaves occupy the centre of the panel. The interior of the fireplace is lined with cast-iron plates with decorations upon them of the seasons. Upon each side of the fireplace rise pilaster panels, decorated with arabesques, medals,

lions, and figures, which, but for their greater delicacy and transparency of color, remind one of the Raphael loggia of the Vatican. All around the room the lowest three feet of the walls are formed into dado panels, all similar in decoration. A central candelabrum supports an amphora, and acanthus volutes turning from each side; on these are cupids, holding wreaths of flowers painted conscientiously after nature. The arabesque is all in delicate relief of green and yellow gold.

Above the dado series are tall pilaster panels, separated from the dados by narrow panels simply decorated. These long panels contain elaborate Renaissance arabesques, fruit-baskets, urns, vases, and garlands. Each composition is supported on a gilt figure carved in relief and is broken by medallion cameos painted with marvellous delicacy, representing domestic scenes, classical figures, allegories of the seasons, bits from Æsop's fables, Auroras, Floras, Juno with her peacock and Jupiter on lightning

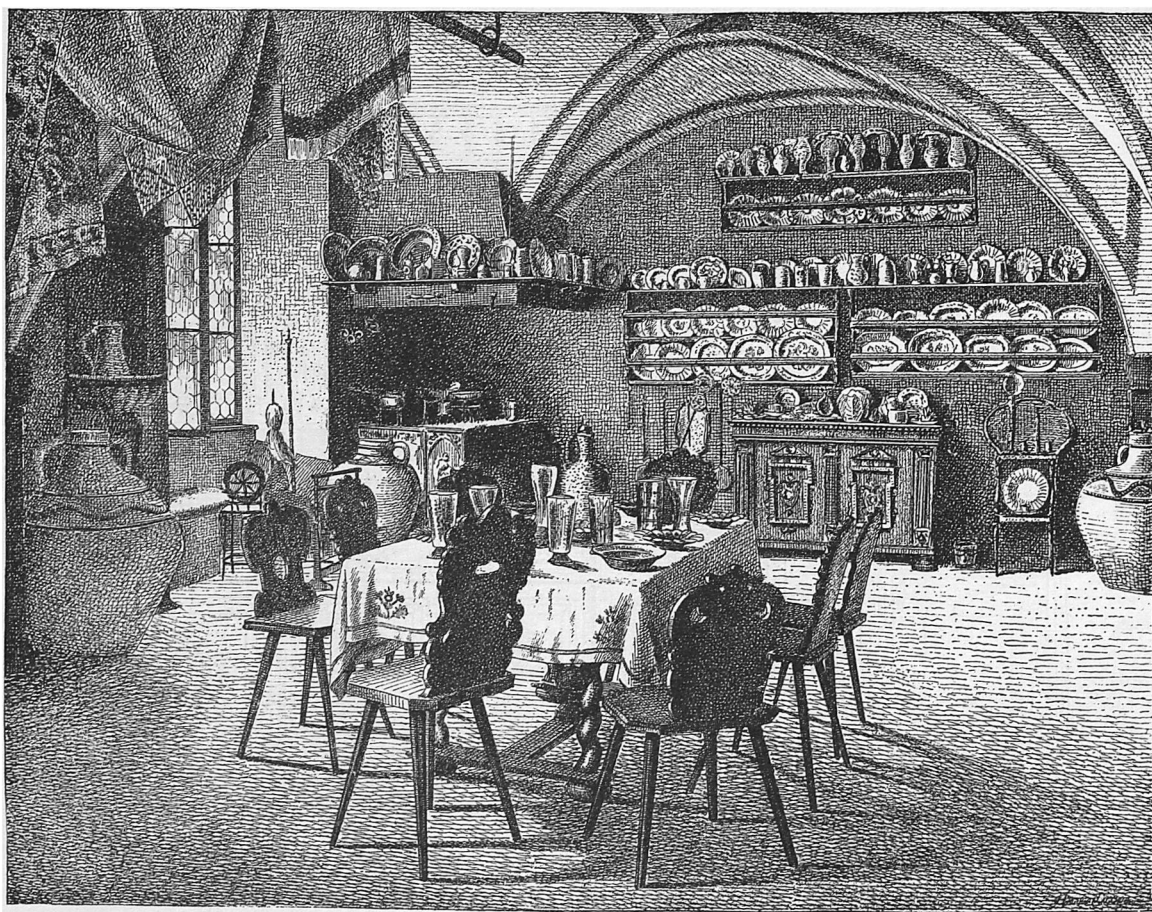


THE STUDIO SCENE IN "ESMERALDA." BY HUGHSON HAWLEY.

DRAWN BY THE ARTIST.

with a taste and skill that very few nineteenth-century artists could surpass.

The little boudoir has a parquet floor, kept covered for some occult reason by a dingy druggot. One won-



KITCHEN IN THE SALZBURG MUSEUM.

ders at this, for the muddy crimson quite kills the delicate colors of wall and ceiling. The four walls are painted with arched panels, the arches forming lunettes adorned with recumbent figures. The lunette over the

clouds, boys and girls among wheat-fields, fauns laughing among the vines, maidens bathing white limbs in transparent water—in short, every fancy of picturesqueness that the world of beauty, classic, romantic,